

Remarks

Claims 1-34 have been cancelled without prejudice. New claims 35-66 are submitted and are to form the basis for future prosecution. Claims 35-66 have been prepared by reverting to original claims 1-34 as filed and amending the independent claims to include features corresponding to those of original claim 8.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 112

The wording giving rise to the earlier rejection has been changed in the newly filed claims. Specifically, the wording “at least partially removing those users in the subconference from the main conference” has been replaced with “maintaining at least some communications between those users in the subconference private from the main conference”. It is submitted that this amendment overcomes the rejection.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

New claim 35 incorporates the features previously found in claim 8. Accordingly, the claimed invention now requires that a user in the main conference is presented with a list of the main conference participants, and that an interface is provided to enable the user to select members of the main conference for participation in a subconference. It is also now specified that the user is presented with a list of subconference participants.

It is noted that the Examiner had rejected previous claim 8, whose subject-matter now appears in claim 35. This rejection was made based on a conclusion that Beyda teaches (1) “the users in the main conference are presented with a list of the main conference participants”, (2) “the option to request a subconference is provided by enabling a user to select participants from the list” and (3) wherein a subconference list is generated and presented to users in the subconference”. Each of these findings is commented on below in turn.

Presenting a list of main conference participants

Regarding the feature listed above as (1), the Examiner has justified this conclusion by stating that in Figure 1 of Beyda, “the conference call subsystem 26 establishes connectivity for the main conference, which is inherently tracked.” It is agreed that the conference call subsystem, which is a centralised conference bridge, will inherently keep track of the participants in the conference.

Applicant’s claims do not specify that the connectivity is tracked, but rather require that the conference participants are presented in a graphical list to a user in the conference. Beyda is silent on the concept of providing the users (who are not located at the conference call subsystem) with a list of the conference participants.

Providing an interface to allow selection of subconference participants from the list

Regarding feature (2), claim 35 specifies “*providing said user with an interface to interact with said graphical list of main conference participants, such that said user has an option to request a subconference with a subset of other users by selecting subconference participants from said graphical list using said interface*”.

Accordingly, the list of conferees presented to the user must be provided with an interface allowing a user to select candidates for a subconference from the list.

In relation to this feature (in original claim 8) reference was made in the Office Action to Figure 1 of Beyda, with the comment that “first terminal 14 transmits a subconference call request 28 to the sixth terminal 24, which inherently must know the users of the network to make such a request.”

It is submitted that all that is required for first terminal 14 to transmit a request to sixth terminal 24, is a valid network connection. The terminals do not need to know of one another’s

existence to transmit this request. For example, any telephone can transmit a request for connection to any other telephone on the public telephone network by the user dialling an identifying number. This number may be found in the newspaper, may be remembered by the user, may be read from the telephone directory, or may be dictated by a directory enquiry service. In none of these cases does the telephone terminal itself have any information stored in advance which identifies the dialled number. It is therefore respectfully submitted that one cannot validly extrapolate that the terminals are aware of one another, simply from the fact that they can be used to contact one another.

Furthermore, the claimed invention requires that the user can interact with a list of conference participants and can select members of this list for a subconference. Nothing in the material cited by the Examiner discloses, explicitly or inherently, such a capability.

Presentation of a subconference list

In relation to feature (3), the Examiner points to the disclosure that "a text message with the call set-up request is sent from the first terminal user to the sixth terminal user". This call set-up request is not a list of the subconference participants. It is simply an invitation to participate in a subconference. The sixth terminal user has no indication from this text message who is active within the subconference. No disclosure is made of a subconference participant list being presented to any of the users in Beyda's system, and this provides a further distinction between the currently claimed invention and the system disclosed by Beyda.

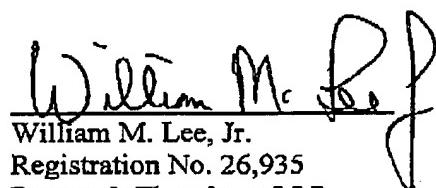
Conclusion

In summary, therefore, it is submitted that the disclosure of Beyda failed to provide any of the original features of claim 8. For this reason, Beyda fails to disclose the further distinguishing features now included in claim 35. As corresponding features are included throughout the independent claims, it is submitted that each of the independent claims, and each dependent claim, is patentable over Beyda at least for the reasons given above.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the Application is in condition for allowance, and further and favorable reconsideration is requested.

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Respectfully submitted,



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